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Adrien Brody on: Wes Anderson, The Pianist and all his history in the theater

By Alex Villatoro
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We meet Adrien Brody with the nostalgic gaze - the owner of one of the noses with the most personality in the world - at the cozy Waldorf Astoria in New York for this exclusive session with Esquire Mexico. Enjoy it as much as we did preparing it.

There are moments in life where things seem to make sense... but this is not one of those moments ", were the words that came from the actor Adrien Brody when he won the Oscar for El Pianista, becoming –at 29 years old– the youngest actor to earn the statuette , since Richard Dreyfuss did it for Goodbye Girl in 1977.

A few seconds earlier, Adrien Brody had jumped onto the stage of the then Kodak Theater, in the heart of Hollywood, taking the presenter of his gold award, Halle Berry, by surprise with a kiss on the mouth that would go down in Academy history as one of his most euphoric and controversial moments.

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Over the years, Adrien Brody's words have also transcended since that spring of 2002, representing that disbelief at being chosen for something greater and being inserted into an extraordinary situation.

The times of 2020, which have confined humanity after the effects of Covid-19, make powerful reflection on trying to find a meaning where apparently there is none.



Photo: César Balcázar

"I think it is a lesson that we learn as we grow. Time becomes more precious. It's not just about the minutes on the clock, it's about being present. Now, with the closure of this quarantine, I want to immerse myself in the things that I love in life ", Adrien Brody shares with Esquire, via a streaming link in which the 47-year-old actor looks framed by a Zoom frame.

Similarly, within the wall paintings is Adrien Brody in the early online trailers for Wes Anderson's *The French Dispatch* (2021) , playing Julien Cardozo, a French art dealer who has been placed in a cell next to a famous painter, Moses Rosenthaler (Benicio del Toro), whom he begs for permission to represent his work in the world, if one day the locks of his confinement are opened or they escape.

Inspired by Joseph Duveen, who in the 20th century brought European works to the great museums of the United States , Cardozo is part of an ensemble of characters that Anderson summoned to be personified by the actors Timothée Chalamet, Léa Seydoux, Edward Norton, Elisabeth Moss , Willem Dafoe, Christoph Waltz and, always on your list, Bill Murray.

The French Dispatch , Anderson's fourth invitation to Brody, brings with it the rebellious spirit of the 1960s, displayed in the publications of a fictional French

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newspaper - much to The New Yorker magazine - with stories, short stories, cartoons and anecdotes from singular personalities.

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All with the geometric, colorful and musical style that characterizes Anderson. “ I'm not necessarily drawn to characters that I have something in common with. Both Cardozo and I have a great love for art and I imagine that he could have aspired to be a painter in his life, but at some point he turned to the business aspect of that world ”, says Brody, who has a fascination for art. image like his mother Sylvia Plachy, a Hungarian migrant and professional photographer with various exhibitions.

When at the 75th Oscar ceremony, Brody, from the seat, heard his name from Berry's mouth, who he first hugged was Plachy, who stood up, his fascination overflowed when he saw Jack Nicholson, Nicolas Cage, Nicole Kidman, and Another group of celebrities, give your son a standing ovation too.



Photo: César Balcázar

“My mom is a great artist and an inspiration to me. Before becoming an actor, I started painting and have done it all my life. I spent years pursuing and cultivating my work as an actor and it was only seven or eight years ago that I began to paint more seriously.

I have done several exhibitions, working hard on it. The quarantine undoubtedly offers more opportunities to do more alone, ” says Brody, who in August 2019 donated a fingerprint painting to UNICEF to help raise funds.

When we at Esquire invited Adrien Brody to his photo shoot, in the heart of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel that adjoins Park Avenue, the echoes of the actor's beginnings in cinema surely arrived, with New York Stories being his first foray to the screen, inside the adventure of a girl who lives in a luxurious hotel in the Big Apple.

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In that 1989 production, Francis Ford Coppola himself was the godfather of the start of Brody's celluloid career. Just a few miles away, in his native Woodhaven, Queens, the actor had experienced the art of wowing audiences when he dressed up as a magician and called himself "The Amazing Adrien", performing various acts at children's parties.

But that neighborhood was also where Brody received the first attacks of violence in the world when he was attacked by other children with cruel comments. His mother, a photographer and his father, a painter and art teacher, used their sensitivity to enroll him in acting classes.

By the age of 13, Adrien was already on the Off-Broadway stage and had participated in a production for the educational television channel, PBS.

The young actor grew up to dominate his own body as an instrument of communication, with a lean complexion and melancholic gaze reminiscent of the masters of silent comedy in the cinema, such as Keaton and Chaplin, added to that large-nosed profile that places him on just like a European, a migrant or a man with a presence who does not want to bow to the onslaught of life.

“As an actor you have your first chances and some of them are as deep as those that will come later in your life, which could seem more important. This is because those opportunities are the first times you have access to real growth . ”



Photo: César Balcázar

"For example, the initial call from an important director, where you understand why you should always strive at all times so that there is that dynamic actor and filmmaker, " explains Brody, who, similar to acting veterans like Donald Sutherland, has his mission accomplished histrionic when they help to materialize the director's vision.

Undoubtedly, the alliance that marked a before and after in Brody's life was his collaboration with Roman Polanski, a controversial lens artist , who saw in the autobiography of his Polish compatriot Wladyslaw Szpilman, inspiration for *The Pianist*, the possibility of narrating his own experience of survival in the Krakow Ghetto.

"*El Pianista* was an epic journey in my life and what I learned, in that process of working with Roman, is to understand the suffering and hatred that society experiences, leading me in that year of filming to appreciate my good luck as a young New Yorker, making myself aware of the loss and ravages of war, "he says.

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recognition for my work.

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"It was something very deep, so deep that I can't even put into words what the experience of filming *El Pianista* meant for me. It was a great gift. Something that opens your eyes and that you are grateful has come from your work ", feels Brody, who lost weight from his 70 kilos to 55 for his role as a Holocaust survivor.

For the film that would take him to the Oscar, Brody had to take to a higher level his expressiveness of the hands, which have always given character to his performance , having to learn to place and move them on the piano keyboard as closely as possible to a professional.

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Polanski himself played the music of the pianist Szpilman on speakers, so that Adrien would mark the notes with that mixture of fierceness and delicacy of his person.

"I never imagined that there would be recognition for my work. As the young man that I was, I felt an awakening as a person. It was certainly a huge turning point in my career and I am very lucky to have received such high-level material and so early in my profession," reveals Brody.

Thus came the opportunity to hang on to the adventure movies and travel the world, a passion that he shares with his Instagram followers, such as climbing in Nepal on the slopes of Everest.

Brody has been Peter Jackson's King Kong Skull Island hiker as well as Terrence Malick's World War II soldier stationed in The Thin Red Line in the Pacific .

He has also dressed as a film noir detective in Hollywoodland, who read Woody Allen's dialogues in Midnight in Paris, being part of a thriller for Spike Lee in Summer of Sam than saving the world from aliens in the Predator remake; not to mention his great escape in the biography of Houdini.



Photo: César Balcázar

The world turned to see him with his interpretation of the bullfighter Manolete, in the biographical film of the same name, where Brody was able to bring his usual intensity to the terrain of tragic love , stepping on the red petals thrown by Penelope Cruz in a tape whose initial sentence explains a little That look of Adrien towards the dark themes of some of his films.

" To be a great bullfighter, you have to be a little in love with death, " he says. The leap from black to light, and from gloomy to laughter, could put Brody as a dancer in his

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performance, never feeling comfortable in one place and now, at The French Dispatch, celebrating his collaboration with Anderson after having been in his Journey to Darjeeling (2007), The Fantastic Mr. Fox (2009) and The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014).

"I feel very privileged to work with Wes Anderson. Having a true friendship with someone with whom you can collaborate creatively is a gift. We are like a family and cultivating that intimacy and trust with someone who helps you elevate yourself artistically is a blessing," explains Brody.

The actor with a postmodern face, who has a caricature of himself on his Instagram account, has also used the time to compose music and write the Clean project, using his own space between walls to create art, reinvent himself and create stories that try to give him sense of things, while the world plays notes of light and shadow in this beginning of the century .



Photo: César Balcázar

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